

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJ: SARG REACTION TO SOLH AS NEW LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER

1. SARG CONTROLLED PRESS AND MEDIA HAVE GIVEN PROMINENT AND FAVORABLE COVERAGE TO DESIGNATION OF RASHID AL-SOLH AS NEW PRIME MINISTER OF LEBANON. IN SPECIAL STATEMENT TO SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY (SANA), SOLH SAID HE HOPES FOR BEST RELATIONS BETWEEN LEBANON AND SYRIA AND THAT POLICY OF HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TO PROMOTE "FIRM AND CORDIAL COOPERATION WITH SISTER SYRIA." PM DESIGNATE PRAISED ASAD'S WISE POLICY IN THE REGION AND THE COMPETENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF SYRIAN MILITARY IN OCTOBER 1973 WAR AND SUBSEQUENT WAR OF ATTRITION.

2. COMMENT: SUCH FAVORABLE COVERAGE OF SOLH'S DESIGNATION AS NEW LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER IS IN STARK CONTRAST TO ADVERSE COVERAGE GIVEN TO SALAM WHEN HE WAS FIRST ASKED TO FORM GOVERNMENT. SARG IS EVIDENTALLY PLEASED WITH DEMISE OF SALAM. WE HAVE HEARD TWO REASONS WHY SARG DISLIKES SALAM. ONE IS THAT HE CONSIDERED TOO CLOSE TO THE WEST AND TO THE U.S. IN PARTICULAR. ANOTHER IS THAT PRESIDENT ASAD PERSONALLY DISLIKES SALAM.
MURPHY

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